



## BRAIN INJURY RESOURCE CENTER of Wisconsin

Our headquarters may be in southeastern Wisconsin, but our hearts, hands, and help are statewide.

The *Brain Injury Resource Center of Wisconsin* is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose mission is to offer assistance and provide resources to people in Wisconsin who are living with the consequences of brain injury.

We would like to offer you a voice, to lend support (wherever possible), to provide hope, and most importantly just be there when you need us. No one should ever feel as if they are alone during their recovery and after. It is the *Brain Injury Resource Center of Wisconsin's* overall goal to make sure that does not happen.

Check [www.bircofwi.org](http://www.bircofwi.org) for the latest events, information and more!

### Our Goal

This 501c3 non-profit organization was founded by a mother daughter team, which is comprised of Lois York-Lewis and Bari York, because they saw first hand the need to help survivors of brain injury in Wisconsin. This need was realized in 2005 after Bari sustained a severe traumatic brain injury. There was a lot of confusion during the “what-now” phase of brain injury. Confusion can be a part of the aftermath of brain injury, and the *Brain Injury Resource Center of Wisconsin* wants to make sure this confusion is non existent. Living, loving, and encouraging a survivor of brain injury for the past several years has not only shown us how hard it is to find answers, but how difficult it can be to get someone to really care about the little issues that occur after the fact. Keeping a silent voice, ignoring it, denying the condition, or hoping it will all go away some day isn't the answer and unfortunately not always the reality.

## BIRCoFWI Bulletin:

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### Casting Call:

Have you ever written for a newspaper, publication; maybe you have an idea for a future story or perhaps you are a good analyzer of information and want to be an editor for the Bulletin.

**Contact us!**

**Call us:** (262) 770-4882

**E-mail us:** [bari@bircofwi.org](mailto:bari@bircofwi.org)

# Programs and Services:

## A host of free programs and services for survivors and their loved ones (A Brief Overview)

The Brain Injury Resource Center of Wisconsin wants to thank everyone who attended and donated to the Brain Injury Global Picnic on June 30th. The event was a huge success and all monies will be used to further support our programs and services. A special thank you goes out to those who attended this event; in total there were close to 100 people there. Without all of you the event would have not been such a great success! This picnic was a great event and along with fun came some awareness education!

### Tote Bag Program

Our Tote Bag Program has been designed for a family who's loved one is the victim of a moderate to severe brain injury. Getting "the call" rushing to the hospital, entering the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), and facing the unknown can be one of the most stressful situations anyone may encounter.



### Peer Mentoring

A peer mentor is in the unique position of knowing exactly what you're facing—they've been through most of the same experiences themselves! There are many benefits realized from a peer-mentor experience.

### Speakers Bureau

Comprised of brain injury survivors, family members, and individuals who have professional careers and/or have experience with brain injury. These speakers provide information about brain injury through personal stories and raising awareness to overcome barriers by enlightening the community, educators and students, health care professionals, civic groups, law enforcement and more.

### Spiritual Outreach

Envision the BIRC of WI as a means to locate support that will enhance the spiritual and emotional needs of brain injury survivors and loved ones. This is an important component to acceptance and finding a quality of life. Our approach emphasizes the dignity of the individual by offering support during turbulent times. We believe that a person's spiritual and emotional well being plays an important part in overall health and recovery. Our spiritual Outreach focuses on concerns for the dignity of people, provides a steady course through turbulent times, and is respectful to the spiritual beliefs and needs of everyone. We encourage all brain injury survivors and their families to call upon the leaders of their own faith group to visit and provide support consistent with their faith practices.

### Friendship Network

These social gatherings are intended to assist the brain injury survivor in building strong, long lasting bridges of trust, respect, understanding, and acceptance. Once a month these survivors get together and to have a great time, because they are around others who truly "get it." These gatherings range from backyard hangouts to picnic's to Brewer games!

### Pen Pal Program

With the onset of social media, texting, and e-mailing, the art of writing a letter or sending a note has fallen to the wayside. But not quite! Our Pen Pal Program offers the participants not only the opportunity to converse with others that have similar interests but to hone their written and social expression skills.

### Volunteer Program

Individuals volunteer for a wide variety of reasons, especially wanting to help others. Often these individuals derive "benefits" from volunteering. Instead of considering volunteering as something you do for people who are not as fortunate as yourself, begin to think of it as an exchange. Consider that most people find themselves in need at some point in their lives. Today you may be the person with the ability to help, but tomorrow you may be the recipient of someone else's volunteer effort.

### Education and Training

As we move forward in 2012, the BIRC of WI will be conducting a variety of Education and Training activities. These range from "Day in the Life" events to specialized sessions. All activities revolve around the survivor in the "What Now" phase and are designed to encourage personal growth and development.

### Resource Facilitation

We offer Resource Facilitation for those who are looking for answers. Not everyone is computer and Internet savvy. Not everyone has the time and/or patience to research thousands of website, resources, and tidbits available on the Internet. Not all resources and informational data can be found on the Internet either. Our Resource Facilitation Service is here to assist survivors and their families no matter where in the recovery process they may be. Inquires vary by situation and circumstance.



For more information visit our website at [www.bircofwi.org](http://www.bircofwi.org)

# TBI and Alcohol Consumption

## Editorial Contributor: Larry Strait



As a survivor of a 2005 TBI, I can attribute my positive recovery to two major reasons. First, I never 'gave up' and always made it a point to maintain a positive attitude no matter what the ongoing diagnosis was. Also, I always listened and took serious all doctor dos and don'ts. One of those don'ts was to never mix alcohol with TBI and TBI recovery. Several studies have been conducted to determine the impact that alcohol has on TBI. The following are two of those studies.

The *\*Substance Use Brain Injury Bridging Project* found the following impacts that alcohol on TBI:

- Lowers seizure threshold
- Increases risk for additional TBIs Contributing to brain damage
- Interferes with the natural healing process of the brain
- Exacerbation of TBI-related physical and psychological symptoms (e.g., balance difficulties, depression)
- Magnifications of TBI-related cognitive difficulties (e.g., judgment, decision-making)
- Heightens the risk for suicide attempts, particularly when depression is also present
- Increases risk for legal difficulties/criminal misconduct
- Increases the Difficulty to distinguish whether cognitive difficulties (e.g., problems with memory) are due to TBI or substance abuse.

In a similar Study by the *\*\*Ohio Valley Center for Brain Injury Prevention and Rehabilitation*, it was found that alcohol has the follow effects on TBI:

- Effect #1: Less Recovery
  - TBI causes some brain cells killed and others disconnected. Recovery requires relearning by making new connection. Using alcohol will interfere with the development of these new connections.
- Effect #2: Problems with Balance, Walking and Talking
  - TBI can cause problems with balance, walking, and talking. Mixing alcohol with TBI exacerbates the conditions, and could cause falls and slurred speech.
- Effect #3: Do and Say Without Thinking
  - Brains have a program called "Good Idea/Bad Idea." This program tells us what is appropriate and what is not. TBI can impact this fine line between good ideas and bad ideas. The mix of alcohol with TBI shuts off this "Good Idea/Bad Idea" program.
- Effect #4: Problems with Thinking
  - TBI causes many people to have to learn new skills, or relearn old ones. People have trouble with concentration, memory, word-finding, problem-solving and other thinking skills, depending on where the brain is injured. Alcohol interferes with the ability to think and learn new things.
- Effect #5: More Powerful Effect
  - After TBI, there are not as many neurons to absorb the alcohol. No matter how much alcohol a person was able to use before, it's less now.
- Effect #6: More Likely To Be Depressed
  - Being depressed is fairly common after TBI. Everything is different, there are financial as well as many other worries. Often alcohol is consumed to try to make this depression go away, but alcohol depresses the brain which results in increased depression.
- Effect #7: Seizure
  - TBI causes seizures for about 5% of the people. Seizures are serious and steps need to be taken to avoid them. Some people require anti-seizure medication. Mixing alcohol is very dangerous and can INCREASE the chance of seizure
- Effect #8: Another Brain Injury
  - People who have a TBI have three times greater chance for a second injury. There may be a higher chance with problems of balance, coordination, vision and judgment. Also, with each brain injury it takes less force to cause greater harm. Alcohol raises this risk of another injury.

\*\* Source - <http://ohiovalley.org/informationeducation/materials/>

# Outdoor Games and Activities

Editorial Contributor: Bari York



With the summer season comes a warmer time of year, which means there are more activities one can do. The following is a small listing of some outdoor summer games and activities a person can do and what is great about the ones listed is that anyone can do them:

- ✦ **Hiking** can incorporate many of a persons senses and make them feel good both inside and out. For example, seeing the wild life, flowers, grass (something that was not very visible in the winter), and trees can appeal to your sense of sight. While hiking a person may feel happy, at peace or even calm.
- ✦ **Spending the Day at the Beach** is both fun and inexpensive. Most beaches there is not a fee associated with the experience. Pack a lunch, sun-screen, some beach toys, a few towels and you are set to enjoy a day at the beach.

- ✦ **Checking out the different bugs** in your yard or a nearby park. Pick up a spare box or go to the hardware store and pick one up. Make sure to insert some holes and for a closer view use a magnifying glass.
- ✦ **Bird watching** is an activity that anyone can enjoy. Write down a list of birds that are common to your area, such as Cardinals, Robins, Yellow Finches, and then go out and see how many you are able to find!
- ✦ **Sports** can be a lot of fun and are also a great source of exercise. This way a person can have fun, stay healthy and exercise all at the same time. There are many grassy areas, open fields and area's to play sports throughout Wisconsin.

The activities above are just a couple of selections, but are not in anyway a full listing of ideas to enjoy the summer. Please visit the following website for some other ideas: <http://family-fun.kaboose.com/12->

## Hiking Corner

Editorial Contributor: Bari York

Hiking is a fun and inexpensive activity to partake in. The benefits of hiking are various, but some include: enhancing your cognitive skills, exercise, a great escape, or a nice way to spend time. What follows are some steps to take before embarking on a hiking experience.

- 1. Research your hike:** start off by looking at some hiking maps that are available, on-line, check some local rest areas, contact the park ranger or ask friends.
- 2. Hiking abilities:** If the hike is more challenging than you are ready for, build up to it rather than jumping right in. This may cause injury or fatigue.
- 3. Hiking buddy:** Never be alone when hiking, because you may run into a problem and you will not want to be by yourself.
- 4. Drink water!**
- 5. Wear sunblock, a hat and the proper gear for your hike!**
- 6. Leave a trail:** In some state park offices they will have bulletin or message boards where you can leave your registration informion.
- 7. Share your trail information:** Inform a person of the hike that you plan to take.

That way if something were to happen, someone would be able to find you. Also another way to share your information is by telling others about accessible trails, which will hopefully lead to more accessible friendly hiking trails.

### Accessible hiking trails:

- ✦ **Paradise Springs Nature Trail:** Located in Kettle Moraine State Forest – Northern Unit, WI. This trail is .5 miles and this trail offers sights of a natural spring and a trout pond for catch and release fishing.
- ✦ **Ozaukee Interurban Trail:** Located just north of Milwaukee. This trail is paved and runs from southern Mequon to north through Ozaukee County to north of Belgium.
- ✦ **Glacial Drumlin Trail:** Located in Cottage Grove then east to Waukesha. This 52 mile trail is comprised of 13 paved miles and 39 miles of crushed limestone surface trail. There are accessible restrooms along this trail.

For more information about assessable hiking trails please visit the website below:  
<http://greatwheelchairaccessiblehikes.com/Wisconsin.php>

**Why Should You DONATE Today?** It's Simple - We are not a membership based organization and our Programs and Services, quarterly Bulletin, and assistance are provided at no charge to brain injury survivors (with the exception of a few special Events). To ensure that these offerings continue to be available for life times to come, it is vital that you consider making a donation today! If your personal budget is feeling the pinch, why not ask your employer to host a green and purple day, chili cook-off, bake sale, or any easy to run event that does not interfere with the work day. Contact us today and we will send information about our organization to share at any work-place fundraiser event. **All proceeds from events should be made payable to and sent to BIRCoFWI, P.O. Box 808, Muskego, WI 53150-0808.**

**Where DOES the Money Go?** We use our dollars wisely to promote prevention, create an environment where awareness and education is available at every event, function, fundraiser, or meeting that our staff and/or volunteers participate in. Of course there are also operational costs associated with running every organization (everything from paper for the printer, to postage for the mailings.) We try to keep our expenses as low as possible to ensure all monies received are used for their intended purpose.

We focus on our goals and objectives knowing that brain injury survivors are the inspiration for our continued efforts:

**The primary objective of our organization is to support brain injury survivors and families during the recovery process and beyond:**

Resource Facilitation Service  
Peer-Mentor Program  
Spiritual Outreach Program  
Pen-Pal Program  
Support Group Program  
Brain Injury Survivor Assistance Fund  
Brain Injury Survivor Grant-Scholarship Award

**The second objective is to educate, inform, and enhance awareness of the challenges faced by brain injury survivors:**

Return to Work - Employer Awareness and Employee Guidance  
Assistance to Professionals  
Education and "Awareness" Training – (For example)  
- Concussion Awareness Presentation  
- What does "Double Vision Feel Like" Empathy Presentation  
- (Upcoming) Day in the Life Series

**The third objective is to allow the community to participate in taking care of its own and dismiss the assumptions and misguided thinking about brain injury and recovery:**

Friendship Network Gatherings (monthly or quarterly)  
Brain Injury Picnics (annual)  
Salute to Brain Injury Survivors Fashion Show (Annual)  
Volunteer Program  
Speaker and Presenter Bureau  
Meet and Greet Sessions  
Tote Bag Program

### **Message from the Executive Director:**

As we enter the start of the second half of 2012 we want to thank everyone who made our March Fashion Show and our June Picnic a huge success! What makes these events even more exciting is that brain injury survivors are directly involved with planning, creating, running and supporting these events.

Not only are they offered the opportunity to build, gain and enhance their skills and ability as they continue to recover, but total participation is helping to break the cycle of isolation so commonly associated with brain injury. We are not a membership based organization for a very strong reason, so many survivors and their families are on strict budgets and limited incomes and it is important to bring the highest quality of programs and services to these individuals so that we can enhance their quality of life without the burden of further financial obligations.

It is for that reason that we want to remind all those that are more fortunate how important it is to donate to our organization. As little as \$1.00 for each family member will go a long way as we continue to bring education and awareness events, coordinate and hold social gatherings via the friendship Network, connect survivors to one another through the pen pal program and peer mentoring and begin to offer funding opportunities for families such as our survivors assistance fund and our grant/scholarship award. Your donations are also used to ensure our tote bags are on hand to the trauma hospitals that participate in our tote bag program. All donations are tax exempt. In closing I want to thank you in advance as you consider making a donation to our non-profit organization in supporting brain injury survivors in your community.

In closing I want to thank you in advance as you consider making a donation to our non-profit organization in supporting brain injury survivors in your community.

Take Care,



## Sharing Stories in the Cozy Corner

Jennifer Berry

On October 11, 1994, when I was 17 years old, I was in a very serious car accident. I was leaving my after-school job and must have pulled out in front of a large truck. My car was struck on the driver's door and I was thrown through the passenger window 75 feet through the air.

My neighbor, who was an off-duty police officer, happened to be driving by the scene and first responded. My heart had stopped beating and I wasn't breathing so he started CPR. I was then flown via Flight for Life to Milwaukee where I was in a coma for five and a half days.

I had broken many bones, including my pelvis in 11 pieces and ripped my kidney into three pieces. I also sustained a Traumatic Brain Injury and life would never be the same.

My life from this point seemed as if it was one hospital after another, in fact when I was released from the hospital I had been in three hospitals. My hospital stay was a total of three months and after those three months everything was a struggle since my short-term memory was affected greatly from the brain injury.

I also have double vision in the outer part of my vision field and my left frontal lobe was severely damaged, which effects emotions.

When I returned to my high school, they had no idea how to help a student with a brain injury. There I was, with no support, but I decided to graduate from high school and I went to Marion College in Fond du Lac to finish the credits I had left. I ended up not concentrating on my class work and left college in the middle of the second semester.

After leaving college I moved to Florida to be a nanny for my mom's friend. I took the little girl into a Hyperbaric Oxygenation Chamber a couple times a day for a few months. The therapy greatly improved my cognitive function and I began drawing again, like in high school.

I returned to Fond du Lac and contacted the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, and I enrolled at the technical college for a few classes.

Then I met my husband while camping with some friends where he was playing in his band. We dated for a year and got engaged, and I was married in April 2000.

I then attended Fox Valley Technical College in Appleton, where I had a tutor for Anatomy & Physiology and received un-timed tests for a few of my classes. They have a great support staff there for any kind of learning disability.

I graduated in 2003 as a Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant, and when my first son was born a couple months later, I decided to stay home with him. I worked a short-term job at Winnebago Mental Health Institute in the craft cottage working one-on-one with patients.

Later on I worked part-time at Renaissance Assisted Living while pregnant with my second son. I was able to keep notes at both jobs to help with my memory issues.

I now am a full-time stay at home mom and I spend my time with my boys, who are 4 and 8. I am also a craft co-chair leader at my church's Mom's Group. I know God will lead me in the right direction when the time comes for me to go back to "work."

I still struggle with my short-term memory but now my emotions have been more under control with simple breathing exercises and staying active. Very soon I plan on starting a Friendship Network in the Fox Valley to help individuals with brain injury connect and get moral support.

I realize how difficult it can be for persons with brain injuries to maintain their friendships and/or make new ones. Hopefully The Friendship Network of the Fox Valley will be a success 😊



Jennifer Berry and her mom  
Kathleen Kelliher

### Friendship Network "Just Like Me"

The Friendship Network "Just Like Me" gatherings are currently being conducted in Milwaukee, Waukesha and Winnebago Counties. These gatherings can take place either quarterly or monthly. Do not mistake these gatherings for support groups, because they take on an entirely different feel. These gatherings take place not in a hospital setting, rather we get together at each others houses, go to comedy sportz and even a Brewer game! We are there for anyone, and as our tag line goes, *Our headquarters may be in southeastern Wisconsin, but our hearts, hands and help are statewide.*

## Summertime: Thrilling summer sports are fun for most of us, but risky activities for survivors of TBIs

Editorial Contributor: Angela Dentice

As I watched our grandchildren water-ski, “tube” and jet ski around an inland Wisconsin lake on the Fourth of July, I was struck by how much pleasure these simple summertime “sports” can provide to children and adults. The children and adults screamed with joy as they traveled at high speeds around and around the lake.

When they were jettisoned off these devices, their entire bodies (including their heads) were trust vigorously onto the lake’s surface. As they emerged from the depths of the water, their grins widened and their laughter grew louder.

As I observed everyone participate in these thrilling, typical Wisconsin lake activities, I thought back on the brain injury survivors who have been my clients through the years. For individuals who have suffered traumatic brain injuries, activities on lakes such as “tubing,” water skiing, and jet skiing are not simple summertime activities to be enjoyed without hesitation.

These activities are risky for this population.

These activities carry a risk in that they can result in trauma to the head and brain. Thus, many survivors of brain injury avoid them altogether - and with good rationale.

There is increasing evidence that multiple diffuse injuries to the brain can cause cumulative brain injury. If after an initial brain injury, there are enough remaining brain cells to allow for some recovery and the acquisition of compensatory skills, each additional

injury will cause the death of even more brain cells.

Thus, multiple injuries may ultimately result in gaps in brain cells and permanent (or greater permanent) deficits in cognitive and physical functioning. Further, with reduced cognitive functioning, there is the risk of additional injuries due to poor judgment or decreased awareness of safety.

The net effect is that each new injury to the brain becomes more significant than the last.

As a lawyer who has represented children who have sustained a traumatic brain injury, oftentimes the parents of these children do not allow them to engage in these types of summer “sports” activities. The parents are aware that being thrown from a personal water craft (jet ski), or even a tube carries with it the risk of an additional injury to the brain and thus, the risk of cumulative damage to this most vital organ.

Lawyers who represent men, women and/ or children who have sustained brain injuries, should be aware of the risk of cumulative damage. This is an element of damage that should be taken into account in any case involving a traumatic brain injury.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the occurrence of brain injury is most common among children 0 to 4 year, teenagers 15 to 19, and older adults 65 year and above (2006). Needless to say, but it is a loss unique to this population.

<http://www.cdc.gov/traumaticbraininjury/statistics.html>



About the author: Ms. Dentice represents adults and children who have sustained brain injuries as a result of the negligence of others. In 2010, she received the Trial Lawyer of the Year Award from the Wisconsin Associate of Justice. Before attending law school, she taught handicapped children.

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M. Angela Dentice represents individuals throughout Wisconsin who have sustained a brain injury, including a traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic concussion or birth injury.

Ms. Dentice and her staff have worked with some of the leading experts in the area of TBI. These include neurologists, neuropsychologists, life care planners and vocational counselors from around the U.S.

Before attending law school, Ms. Dentice was a teacher of handicapped students.

Because each persons injuries are unique, Ms. Dentice handles each client in a personal manner. She can give you the personal attention you deserve.

**CONTACT MS. DENTICE TODAY 414-259-1000**

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Glassman & Stanik LLC specializes in psychological and neuropsychological evaluation of persons with brain injury or neurological disease, along with appropriate therapies and community reintegration.



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P.O. Box 808  
Muskego, WI 53150



## Want More Information?

Look for our next issue coming out  
October 2012

We are here to help!

If you would like a copy of this bulletin or more information about any of the articles within, please contact the Brain Injury Resource Center of Wisconsin at [admin@bircofwi.org](mailto:admin@bircofwi.org), or visit our website at [www.bircofwi.org](http://www.bircofwi.org)

Thank you for reading and make sure to look for the next bulletin!



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